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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2891  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 2981  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2053  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0167  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0783  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4398  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 6457  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000414

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2016

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA MONITORING MISSION: SCORING THE GENEVA  
REPORT CARD SO FAR

REF: A. COLOMBO 408

[1](#)B. 2005 COLOMBO 312

Classified By: POLCOUNS PMAHONEY. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Spokeswoman Helen Olafsdottir told poloffs on March 17 that the level of violence in the north and east had diminished dramatically since the February 22-23 talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Geneva. Despite the decline in violence, the SLMM has seen no direct evidence so far of the LTTE ending child recruitment or of the GSL actually disarming paramilitaries, she reported. Although things have been comparatively calm so far, the true test of how well both parties keep their respective Geneva commitments may come the week of March 20, she predicted, when the LTTE is expected to reopen its political offices in GSL-controlled territory. End summary.

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COMPLAINTS ARE DOWN  
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[1](#)2. (C) In a March 17 meeting with poloffs, Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Spokeswoman Helen Olafsdottir said that the truce monitoring organization had registered a total of only about "50 to 60" complaints from both parties since the conclusion of talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Geneva on February 23. The volume of complaints had not been so low since the beginning of February 2005 when E. Kaushalyan, the LTTE political leader for Batticaloa and Ampara, was killed in an ambush by suspected Karuna militants (Ref A), she noted. After that killing, the violence had increased steadily until it peaked in December/January of this year, when incidents were occurring so quickly, so frequently and in so many places that the SLMM had to be very "selective" about which it investigated.

13. (C) Even with the dramatic drop in violence, Batticaloa remains the most challenging area for truce monitors, Olafsdottir said. On the other hand, she noted, Jaffna has calmed down since the Sri Lankan military had relaxed fishing restrictions, while Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Ampara had reported few problems at all. Even though both the GSL and the LTTE have been busy trading allegations of violations against each other, the SLMM is finding it difficult to document many of the recent purported incidents, she said. Most of the complaints received since February 23 relate to allegations of harassment--always hard to verify--and abduction, she reported. The SLMM had been unable to certify, for example, that an alleged attack on an LTTE post in Batticaloa had taken place at all because there had been no casualties, injuries or other obvious evidence of an attack. In another widely reported incident, both parties accused each other of having abducted two students from a local school in Batticaloa on March 13 (with TamilNet blaming the disappearances on "paramilitary cadres" and the southern press accusing the LTTE), but the two teenagers quickly resurfaced uninjured on March 16 and have been unable to offer any definitive information on their abductors. The SLMM "will never know who's behind that," the spokeswoman observed, or in many other similar incidents.

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KARUNA VISIBILITY IS UP  
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14. (C) The other noticeable change since Geneva, Olafsdottir said, is that the dissident Karuna faction has become "very, very vociferous," "arrogant," and is "in our face constantly"

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in Batticaloa. Karuna cadres attempted to enter the offices of SLMM and ICRC in Batticaloa to distribute their "newsletter," she charged, and are following SLMM personnel as they go about monitoring duties in Batticaloa. Even though the cadres are in civilian clothes and do not appear to be armed, the attempt to harass or intimidate seems clear, she asserted. SLMM is now "limiting" its travel to areas (like Welikanda) that require them to pass through lonely jungle terrain. Karuna cadres are more openly intimidating Batticaloa townspeople as well, Olafsdottir indicated. She reported that Karuna militants had visited local merchants to demand they defy a March 17 "hartal," or shut-down, called by the LTTE in Batticaloa town, insisting that they remain open despite the Tiger bn. As a result, the hapless local residents are "squeezed" between both groups of militants, Olafsdottir said.

15. (C) References to Karuna's putative political party, Tamil Eelam Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP or Tamil Eelam People's Freedom Tigers), are also much more prevalent--and visible--in Batticaloa nowadays, Olafsdottir commented. Observing that a new Karuna website ([www.tamilalai.org](http://www.tamilalai.org)) displayed a picture of the former LTTE military commander sporting a respectable-looking shirt and tie, she wondered aloud if Karuna might be trying to clean up his image as a prelude to entering politics. She expressed skepticism that Karuna is as popular in the east as some in the GSL and many in the military claim, noting that the LTTE still wields substantial influence in some areas. (That Karuna cadres reportedly continue to extort money, threaten and harass civilians in the east may also be a factor.)

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THE REPORT CARD SO FAR  
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16. (C) The SLMM will face the formidable task at the next round in Geneva of reporting how both parties have upheld their respective commitments in the February 23 joint statement, Olafsdottir acknowledged. She expressed concern that the April 19-21 meeting could degenerate into a

"shouting match" between both parties, with each accusing the other of violating these commitments. While the SLMM has seen no evidence of "armed groups" actually carrying arms in GSL-controlled territory since February 23, neither has it seen evidence of the GSL disarming anyone, Olafsdottir commented. (Poloff observed that if violence ceases in GSL-controlled territory, the GSL will likely consider that adequate evidence that it is restraining "armed groups.") On the other hand, the SLMM has seen no evidence that the LTTE has stopped recruiting children, Olafsdottir reported. She added that the LTTE continues to insist that the SLMM not count child recruitment as a ceasefire violation since it is not expressly forbidden under the Ceasefire Agreement (and also since child recruitment accounts for more than half of the ceasefire violations in the LTTE column). The SLMM, however, will not change its position that LTTE child recruitment violates international law.

17. (C) The real test will come the week of March 20, Olafsdottir predicted, when the LTTE is expected to reopen its political offices--perhaps in preparation for March 30 local elections--in GSL-controlled territory. The SLMM will monitor the potentially explosive situation closely, she averred.

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LINKS OR NO LINKS?  
THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION  
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18. (C) While the SLMM has never found any direct evidence linking the Karuna faction to the GSL, there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest some degree of GSL complicity and/or knowledge--whether it be just "tuning a

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blind eye" or more direct support, Olafsdottir said. At the very least, Karuna cadres simply could not have moved around as freely as they did in such proximity to military positions without the military being aware of them, she argued. In addition, she said she had at least one reliable report of a pre-Geneva instance of logistical support (providing transportation to a group of Karuna cadres traveling from Ampara). Since Geneva, the SLMM does not know "whether local (military) commanders were ordered to cut links" with Karuna cadres, she said; if so, perhaps this newly "cold shoulder" from the GSL could explain the faction's more "arrogant" posture in Batticaloa.

19. (C) Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera had misrepresented the SLMM position in his recent remarks to BBC, she stressed. The SLMM had not, as the Minister suggested, stated that there were no paramilitaries operating in GSL-controlled territory--only that the SLMM could not prove that armed groups there were operating did so with GSL support. The SLMM has been trying in discussions with both parties to shift the focus from arguments about responsibility for a particular "armed group" to a recognition that each party is responsible for ensuring territories under their respective control are violence-free. "We're saying that it doesn't matter who's responsible for an armed group"; what matters is who is responsible for the area in which these "armed groups" operate and commit violent acts.

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COMMENT  
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110. (C) While the level of violence may be declining sharply, the war of words--with allegations and counter-allegations of violations from both sides--seems to be just heating up. It will be up to SLMM to sort out--and to report in Geneva--the validity of these accusations. So far, as Olafsdottir noted, he SLMM has found little or no evidence to support post-Geneva claims of violations--but

also can point to no evidence that either side is taking clearly identifiable, pro-active steps to uphold its commitments in the joint statement. The Karuna cadres' new "in-your-face" visibility and "vociferousness" in Batticaloa, combined with the prospective reopening of LTTE political offices in GSL-controlled territory, seems a volatile mix that can only make SLMM's already daunting task more difficult.

ENTWISTLE